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College of Medical Sciences *Rezonanca*
Clinical Psychology, BSc

Final Report

ACCREDITATION

REPORT OF THE EXPERT TEAM

May 5, Prishtina



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context

Date of site visit (on line): May 11, 2021

Expert Team (ET) members:

- Prof. Dr. Melita Kovacevic

Coordinators from Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA):

- Naim Gashi, Executive Director of KAA
- Shkelzen Gerxhaliu, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation
- Arianit Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Evaluation and Accreditation
- Leona Kovaçi, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation
- Ilirjane Ademaj, Senior Officer for Monitoring and Evaluation

Sources of information for the Report:

- Clinical Psychology Programme, BSc, SER (Self Evaluation Report plus annexes);
- Meetings with management, staff, students, administrators, and graduates of the institution;
- Additional materials requested by the Expert

Criteria used for program evaluation:

- KAA Accreditation Manual
- Relevant legislation



1.2. Site visit (on line) schedule

11 May

09.00 – 09.45	Meeting with the management of the faculty where the programme is integrated (<i>no slide presentation is allowed, the meeting is intended as a free discussion</i>) – <i>Joint session</i>
09.50 – 10:30	Meeting with quality assurance representatives and administrative staff - <i>Joint session</i>
10:30 – 11:10	Lunch break
11:10 – 12:10	Meeting with the heads of the study programme
12:15 – 12:50	Meeting with teaching staff
12:55 – 13:40	Meeting with employers of graduates
13.40 – 13:50	Internal meeting of KAA staff and experts
13.50 – 14.00	Closing meeting with the management of the faculty and program

1.3. A brief overview of the institution and programme under evaluation

College of Medical Sciences “Rezonanca” was established in 2003. According to decision no. 452 / 18D, dated 18.05.2018, the State Council of Quality (SCQ) extends the period of institutional accreditation and study programs for a period of one year (1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019). The College of Medical Sciences "Rezonanca" is a private higher education institution. The College of Medical Sciences "Rezonanca" offers bachelor studies in BSc Biochemistry Laboratory, BSc in Community Pharmacy, BSc in Physiotherapy, BSc in Nursing, BSc Sanitary Medicine, BSc in Diagnostic Radiology, Integrated Dentistry Program (300 ECTS Dr.stom.), and two master programs: MSc in Pharmacy and MSc in Nursing. The



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College of Medical Sciences “Rezonanca” offers high-level studies only for medical fields for the population of Kosovo. The College has a mission to organize university studies, based on European standards for higher education, professional and scientific research standards, which will contribute to overall regional development, as a precondition for equalizing with the developed area of Europe. According to the SER, the College currently has 1441 students, although, interestingly, exactly the same number of students was reported in the evaluation process in 2019!

2. PROGRAM EVALUATION

2.1. Mission, objectives and administration

The mission of the study programme Clinical Psychology, BSc, according to the SER, is in line with the mission and strategic goals of the College Rezonanca, however the SER then does not provide the evidence for this statement (pg. 4). However, referring to the institutional Strategic Plan, the first component of the institutional mission, it states *Development and application of new concepts of the medical education of XXI cent. In Kosovo* (pg. 40 of the SER, Annex). Clinical psychology programme is not a new concept, and it is not a part of medical education (although according to the relevant Law, clinical psychologists are belonging to the group of health professionals, which is a broader concept than medical education per se, and it also includes speech and language pathologists / logopedists or audiologists), regardless the fact that clinical psychologist can and do work in a medical settings as well, as biologists, physicists etc, electro engineers etc. The SER states that the mission of the BSc Clinical Psychology is to offer specialised training in clinical area, stating that there is a national need for trained clinical psychologists. However it does not recognize transparently, that according to professional regulations, person with the Bachelor degree in psychology cannot be independent psychologist. There is a contradiction in the mission section between education, needs and kind of work that graduates will be able to perform; while so called assistant clinical psychologist could be accepted, it is not justified what is ment by and what kind of work would do the ‘*Research assistant*’.

It is in particularly stressed that there is a strong intention to follow EuroPsy guidelines in structuring the programme. The programme is align with NQF as well as it is in accordance with European Higher Education Area. According to the SER, it has been also taking into



account recommendations and suggesting coming from the institutional and national higher education and QA authorities.

The programme does not have listed learning outcomes, only four objectives are provided in this section of the SER, but learning outcomes are given within the section on educational process and commented there (please, see pg 9 of this report). Although according to the SER, the programmes provides overarching didactic and research concepts, however the fine analysis of the programme did not prove it.

Minimum revision period is determined to be every three years.

The programme follows institutional policies and regulations and assures to have them available for staff and students. There are also ethical regulations assuring ethical conduct in teaching, research and all activities within the Programme.

The programme has responsible academic staff, some of them also having the roles of vice rectors, involved in quality assurance offices etc., however on the basis of interviews during the site visit, it seems that the distribution of responsibilities as well as professional and academic involvements in different tasks is extremely disbalanced. It seems that actual familiarity with different academic, and governance and management issues is predominantly provided by one staff member, while the others, including the Rector, were hesitating to take a part in discussions.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Redefine and align institutional and programme mission*
- 2. Implement programme reviewing on annual or biannual basis in order to assure better quality*
- 3. Optimise institutional structure and distribution of roles and tasks*

2.2. Quality management

The College has the unit and the Vice rector for quality assurance and according to the SER, College is aware of a number of QA processes and implements them on a regular basis,

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primarily evaluating teaching process, staff, and than accordingly trying to improve processes in learning and teaching.

However, because of the overload or insufficient number of staff, it could still happen, as it happened in this evaluation/accreditation process that the College applies for the evaluation, but it does forget to submit the programme curriculum. Although this is anecdotal, it does a bit reflect institutional capacity.

The evaluation of staff is done *less than once a year*, and formal performance assessments of staff are kept confidential.

Quality management meets majority of the standards as specified in the KAA accreditation manual. There are responsible staff for the quality management, there are procedures and all the staff are involved in quality assuring processes. There are also internal assessments procedures regularly implemented, according to the SER.

At this point, it is not possible to check if everything what it has been planned is actually done, however, it does not seem that the plan is to make the results from the evaluations fully available publicly. It was not possible to find the data on the website for other programmes either.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *To assure that evaluation results and survey outcomes are publicly available*
2. *It is important to apply regular monitoring and follow up of all QA processes*
3. *To implement self-evaluations as a regular activity*

2.3. Academic staff

According to the KAA standards, six out of ten standards are met (3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.10). They all meet the basic minimum required criteria. However, although the SER includes the table with some information related to academic staff engaged in the Programme under evaluation, it is not transparent what is the actual teaching load of each staff member expressed



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in their teaching hours (as well as other activities), in particular bearing in mind that the same staff is also teaching in other programmes. Even more, many of them are not teaching in only one programme more, but several. In additionally requested documents, it became evident that the actual teaching load for a number of staff is beyond any European standards for direct contact hours. It is impossible for that staff members to perform any research, especially related to all the courses they teach. This wide range of courses allocated to one, the same person actually speaks against quality and it might question even some positively evaluated aspects of institutional quality assurance, once when we move from the formal aspect and face the content. Speaking about quality control, it should be also noticed that the tables and provided information were providing complete information, or did for some staff members and not for the others.

Special concern is raised regarding the qualification of number of teaching staff to teach courses that are given under their name. They were predominantly medical staff, or even having basic education in stomatology (or dentistry as stated in the provided CVs, and there are couple of staff with this kind of degree or specialisation) or similar and offering courses that are specific for the field of psychology (according to the provided CVs, there are staff who, for example, had their PhD in the area of urology, or degree and/or specialisation in ophthalmology or radiology; it should be also mentioned that there were significant number of CVs provided only in Albanian). Even being a psychiatrist, is not a justification for teaching different psychology courses. Psychology and psychiatry, although being connected in some aspects, they are two different disciplines and professions, with different academic and educational backgrounds. All this sincerely raises number of questions, from professional and academic integrity, quality, personal and institutional responsibility, and finally individual capacity. For individuals who are not trained in psychology, following the vertical educational process, and who do not publish regularly in the field of psychology, it is not possible to teach courses in psychology on HE level.

Another issue is related to academic degrees and their academic credibility to be involved and responsible for academic education in psychology. For staff who are medical staff, work in different clinical-medical units, but than they obtained in some private universities PhD degree in psychology, it might be questionable their readiness to take over psychology courses. There might be some exceptions, for a few courses that could be partially related to the field of medicine, but for the majority it is not justified and it should not be permitted. Moreover, from their work experience, and in particular the published work, it is not possible to identify their

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academic qualifications that would make possible to see the reason why they are included in psychology programme.

During the interviews, it has been formulated that there will be also new employments as well as the fact that some staff members still have slots for more teaching, and that they will be still meeting the criteria defined by the law of the maximum workload, however this has not been supported by the facts and transparent figures.

It is good to recognise that some of staff have competencies and evidently they are committed individuals. Unfortunately, it seems that some teachers, in particular those who have education in psychology, are quite overloaded with the number of courses they need to teach. Of course, this is understandable, bearing in mind that majority of a staff is not in the field of psychology (again, for some of them is justified and it is acceptable).

At this point, standard 3.8 is not met due to the fact, on one side, it is still a programme that did not start being implemented, but on the other, it is also not evident for other existing programmes that evaluations, in particular self-evaluations, are regular and publicly available.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. To increase significantly the number of staff with proper profile for psychology programme
2. To assure well distributed teaching load per staff member
3. Range of courses per staff member should be significantly more narrow
4. To match teaching and research activities of each staff member

a. Educational process content

According to the SER, Programme Clinical Psychology it is compliant with NQF as well as with the Bologna framework. It is three year programme with 60 ECTS per year.

The programme offers a range of mandatory and elective courses which, according to the SER, should enable students to gain different specific and general competencies. Within this section,



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programme also defines eight programme learning outcomes. The listed programme outcomes are not define in an adequate way, since they mostly correspond to individual courses. The courses are offered only in Albanina, ad in case that students do not have a good command of Albaina, they will receive language training prior to entering the Programme.

However, although on a first sight, the curriculum meets criteria of a well developed curriculum, it actually does not make a logical matrix, with a number of inconsistencies, contradictions within individual courses, impossible missions in terms of the content and given learning outcomes, unrealistic list of mandatory teaching material, old fashioned content etc. The following are some, of many examples re the curriculum. In introduction part, it says there will be 330 filed work hours, but in the curriculum are 420; whatever number of hours we take is btw full time working days (42 hours per week) 7,9 and 10 moths of work (the institution provided comments warning that the calculation of 330 field work hours was the correct one; the nontransparent tables were ignored – firstly, it is not logical and clear what kind of field work is, if it has laboratory work (105 hours) plus contact hours (105 hours), plus individual work (105 hours) and than in total it makes 210 hours?!) this does not sound realistic, evenmore because there are very limited places where students can get field work outside the institutions. During the interviews it was checked what kind of laboratories are offered for a practical work, and the answers were ‘a space with computers, projectors etc.’. Of course, this does not correspond to facilites that are fitted for a training of students in clinical psychology.

The way ECTS are presented in the introductory part of the Curriculum document is not a proper way of presenting ECTS, although the numbers are correct. 1 ECTS is not equivalent of 30 classes, as stated, but of working load (expressed in hours).

The overall offer of courses does not justify why this programme is called Clinical psychology, and not General psychology, or just Psychology. An objection is also related to unrealistic lists of literature. The volume, quantity of listed papers and books definitely cannot be an actual list of titles student needs to digest, and of course it does not correspond well to actual number of ECTS. Most likely, the provided list embraces both obligatory and recommended literature, and some selection of chapters are required, but this needs to be clearly presented, not only for the purpose od evaluation, but for the overall transparency.

Within individual courses, there are number of noticed weaknesses, in topics that sometimes are oldfashioned, sometimes too advanced for bachelor students, there is no match between

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learning outcomes and the content, or the words used to define learning outcomes are not appropriate (as to ‘describe’ used for all the learning outcomes within one course), or there is no match between the title of the course and for example listed professional practical skills etc.

The ratio of lecturing hours, seminars, laboratory work requires additional reality check. It is not realistic and not fitted to all the courses, to have for example laboratory work. But it seems that this way of division corresponds well and easily on ‘counting’ needed ECTS and their corresponding workload. Skipping, for example laboratory work, it would cause problems. For the practical experience, bearing in mind the available staff, it is not realistic and it is not stated what kind of monitoring will be actually possible. It is also questionable how and where students will be able to engage in internships. SER is providing an information that there is an agreement signed for a practical work with the University Dentistry Clinical Center, although it is certainly not enough for all the potential students nor is appropriate environment/unit for students to be trained in clinical psychology. Who will, for example, supervise them, monitor their work? This is unrealistic and not self-reflexive considering the actual institutional capacities. The institution in their comments provided a list of other institutions where students could have their practical work (they listed additional 10 institutions), although the SER clearly provided only the above.

At this stage of evaluation, when the programme is actually seeking the accreditation, the standards 4.6, 4.8 and 4.10 are met assuming that what is planned and stated in the SER it will actually be implemented once the programme enrolls students.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:

- 1. Revisit the composition of courses, in particular considering distribution across different modes (laboratories, seminars)*
- 2. Consider establishing a program team to evaluate the appropriateness, measurement, and consistency of learning outcomes across the program’s three years*
- 3. Recheck all the courses, a rationale to have them in the programme of Clinical psychology*
- 4. Revisit the overall concept of the programme and define what kind of competencies will graduate gain*



5. *Literature requirements need to be redefined, and adjusted to actual students needs and capacities*

b. Students

The students did not participate in the interviews due to the fact that there is no enrolled students, therefore the evaluation of standards in this section is based primarily on a written SER. All the standards are met, except the standard 5.3, 5.8 and 5.9. According to the number of students enrolled in other programmes, and the fact that there is a plan for five new programmes, and most likely some of the courses will be common to more than one group of students-programmes, as well as with the shortage of staff, it is possible to conclude that it would not be possible to have the size of students' group where interactive and effective teaching could be managed.

Although there are institutional regulations and committees dealing with misconduct, it appears to be no clear system to examine the originality of student work, and that burden falls upon teacher, primarily. It is strongly recommended to invest in software for plagiarism detection, and to make that resource available to the instructors.

It has been verified that the students' rights and obligations were clearly understood, and it is also supported with the institutional regulation and documents. However, it seems that publicly there is no information on appeals.

Compliance level: Substantially compliant

ET recommendations:

1. *Assure technical support for plagiarism detection, preferable by purchasing a software*
2. *Make sure that the size of students group are optimal for good quality teaching and learning*

c. Research

Research objectives and activities of the study programme follow the institutional strategy and it is developed a strategy for next four years (2019 to 2023).

Academic staff are required to participate actively in the research community, usually as demonstrated by attendance at conferences or the publication of scholarly articles. However,



no one pointed to an issue of low budget for research which might be definitely an issue in the field as psychology which actually asks for more and more funds to perform research neither was clearly stated what are research interests in psychology, considering the fact that significant number of staff do clinical work and they are coming from a medical field. Considering the SER, the College provides some support to staff members to attend conferences. Nevertheless, there is no clear budget, logistic and human resources sufficient to meet some of the proposed programme/institution objectives. Institution has submitted a kind of budget plan for next three years, starting 2022., however, it depends heavily on the income for students fees, and the major portion of research money will not be available till 2023, while no funds are planned for conferences till 2024. This is even more evidenced with the fact that for many staff members there is no clear connection between their teaching areas and their research, and with extremely low overall publishing rate, with a very few exceptions. Dealing with psychology field, this is one of the most serious weak points for those who plan to implement a programme. On the other side, the offer of courses does not reflect actually this extremely modest situation in terms of research and research productivity.

The publication rate does not meet Standard 6.7, which specifies at least one publication per year. Unfortunately, after all the evaluations that took place in each institution, evaluators are still faced with the lists of publications that are missing number of information, that are written in a way that it is not possible to check them and that do not follow any of internationally accepted styles of writing. Often, given publications do not match at all with the courses they suppose to teach. Number of published work appear in low quality journals, or staff list only published abstracts. There is still now culture of presenting published work following some international standards, in particular in the field of psychology. Standard 6.8 was met, at least according to the SER. For majority of the publications was not possible to check.

Regulations for ownership of intellectual property, procedures are still not fully developed. Since there is very little research going on, and on the other side, there is a big overload of teaching for almost all the staff, it is not clear how could students participate in research and how many of them.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:



1. *Consider developing mechanisms for raising research productivity, by defining more focused research topics, form small research groups (instead individual approach)*
2. *Consider small, but publishable research with students and/or graduates*
3. *Research plan needs to fit to the institutional capacity*
4. *Regulate and unify the way of reporting on research productivity, following international standards*

d. Infrastructure and resources

Rezonanca has adequate facilities for regular teaching as well as for practical work for medical educational programmes, however, it has not been evidenced that there are well equipped facilities for practical work in clinical psychology. Administration also has adequate spatial conditions. The administrative and management offices, as well as number of services are also available and adequate to support the programme. There is a new spatial planning, and among other buildings and facilities, there is a plan to have the student dormitory. This will be definitely appreciated by students.

Classrooms are well furnished with all the technical support. Students also have on disposal a library and computers. However, laboratories are not prepared and furnished for practical work in clinical psychology. This has been also stated during the interviews, although the institution claimed in the comments to the draft report that they have on disposal all the inventories for the psychological testing. Of course, if so, there are numerous questions as question of proper translation, adaptation of those test, existence of norms etc., all the standard questions psychologists will raise when it comes to testing, test result interpretation and who is eligible to do the testing. Provided list of titles from the library, has extremely modest number of titles in psychology.

Financial plan has been provided (2019-2021), so there is evidence about financial stability and sustainability of the programme. Standard 7.4 is met, in that the lecture rooms are comfortable and well structured.

Infrastructure and other facilities respond to the program implementation requirements for students with special needs (7.6). Students have access to building and other spaces.

Compliance level: Partially compliant

ET recommendations:



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1. *Specific laboratories for research in psychology needs to be established*
2. *Library needs to be better furnished with more up-to-date titles in the field*

5. OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE ET

In conclusion, the Expert Team considers that the **Clinical Psychology, BSc** is not substantially compliant with the standards included in the *KAA Accreditation manual* and, therefore, recommends **not to accredit the study programme**.

Expert Team

Chair

	Melita Kovacevic	May 18 2021
(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

(Signature)	(Print Name)	(Date)

Member

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